

ury arrived at Madrid with, a ministerial despatch, in which Ouvrard was requested to deliver to the Commissioner all the assets he could command; and to return immediately to Paris. The Treasury was then in the greatest difficulty, and a general alarm prevailed. This serious financial distress was occasioned by the following circumstances. The Treasury had, by a circular, notified to the Receivers-General that Desprez was the holder of their bonds. They were also authorized to transmit to him all their disposable funds, to be placed to their credit in an account current. Perhaps the giving of this authority was a great error; but, be that as it may, Desprez, encouraged by the complaisance of the Treasury, desired the Receivers-General to transmit to him all the sums they could procure for payment of interest under 8 per cent, promising to allow them a higher rate of interest. As the credit of the house of Desprez stood high, it may be easily conceived that on such conditions the Receivers-General, who were besides secured by the authority of the Treasury, would enter eagerly into the proposed plan. In short, the Receivers-General soon transmitted very considerable sums. Chests of money arrived daily from every point of France. Intoxicated by this success, Desprez engaged in speculations which in his situation were extremely imprudent. He lent more than 50,000,000 to the merchants of Paris, which left him no command of specie. Being obliged to raise money, he deposited with the Bank the bonds of the Receivers-General which had been consigned to him, but which were already discharged by the sums transmitted to their credit in the account current. The Bank, wishing to be reimbursed for the money advanced to Desprez, applied to the Receivers-General whose bonds were held in security. This proceeding had become necessary on the part of the Bank, as Desprez, instead of making his payments in specie, sent in his acceptances. The Directors of the Bank, who conducted that establishment with great integrity and discretion, began to be alarmed, and required Desprez to explain the state of his affairs. The suspicions of the Directors became daily stronger, and were soon shared by the public. At last the Bank was obliged to